

Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on “A National Framework for the Review and Labeling of Biotechnology in Food”
June 18, 2015

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Today we continue our examination of the role biotechnology plays on our nation's farms and in our food supply. Our food is literally our lifeline – it is important for the public to be engaged. It is the job of this subcommittee to establish a record based on the facts and the science so we can ultimately pass legislation that is in the best interests of our constituents and our economy.

At the hearing we held in December and in other venues since, the FDA has been clear that the premarket consultation process currently in place to review food produced from genetically engineered crops is rigorous and the agency has no basis for questioning its safety. The World Health Organization and every other legitimate health and scientific body that has examined this evidence has echoed the FDA's findings.

Nonetheless, there are a number of state-specific labeling requirements in various stages of consideration that are inconsistent, potentially confusing to consumers, would increase food costs, and cast doubt over the safety of biotechnology. Mr. Pompeo and Mr. Butterfield have been working tirelessly on a bipartisan basis in putting together a clear and understandable national framework that maintains FDA's current review process, codifies federal labeling standards and related requirements, and establishes a certification process at the Department of Agriculture—consistent with the current organic program—for the labeling of products as having been produced or developed without the use of genetic engineering.

The draft amendment to H.R. 1599 circulated before this hearing is another step in the right direction, and I commend the Agriculture Committee for working with us to get this bill through the House to ensure consumers will have a clear, concise, and consistent system to assist in their food choices.